



WISCONSIN DNR
FISHERIES INFORMATION SHEET

Water: First South Branch Oconto River

County: Oconto

WBIC: 484700

Year: 2013

The First South Branch Oconto River is a tributary to the main South Branch Oconto River. It begins as an outlet of Maiden Lake, then flows through several warmwater lakes before spring flows provide enough flow and cold water suitable for trout. The watershed is primarily forested and within the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest. The First South Branch Oconto River has a total length of 11.7 miles and averages about 26 feet across. The lower reach from Highway 32 down to the confluence of the main branch is considered Class I trout waters. A small stretch from Tar Dam Road down to Highway 32 is Class II waters.

Approximately 1500 yearling brook trout have been stocked in the Class II portion of this stream almost annually since 1972. These are generally legal-sized fish that are typically stocked prior to the inland trout opener in May, although fall fingerlings are occasionally stocked.

Two habitat improvement projects were completed with funding by Trout Stamp dollars and Green Bay, Oconto, and Marinette Trout Unlimited chapters. Bank covers were installed in a stretch downstream from CTH W in the 1980's. Brush bundles, digger logs, boulders were installed downstream from STH 64 in the 1990's.

The First South Branch Oconto River (Oconto County) was surveyed on July 18, 2013 to assess the brook and brown trout fishery. A 0.60 mile (3200-ft) section of the river was sampled downstream from CTH W, west of Mountain in the Town of Mountain (T.31N.-R.16E. Section 20) (Figure 2). This section has been considered a trend site since 2007, is surveyed on a two-year rotation, and contains bank covers installed in the early 1980's.

The overall health of the brook trout fishery in the First South Branch Oconto River is very good. Successful reproduction and recruitment of brook trout was evident from the length frequency of fish collected (Figure 1). Moderate numbers of legal sized (8 inch) brook trout were present.

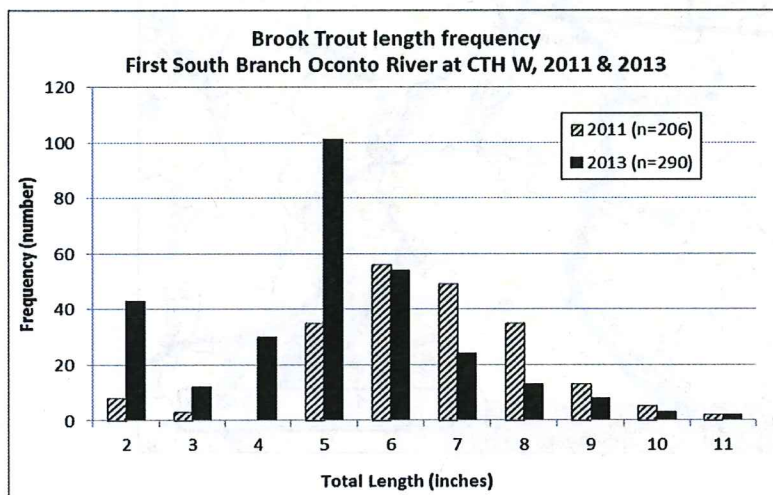


Figure 1. Brook trout length frequency for the First South Branch Oconto River, Oconto County, Wisconsin.

Brook Trout

A total of 290 brook trout were collected and ranged in length from 2.0 to 11.7 inches (Figure 1). The average length of brook trout was 5.5 inches compared to 7.0 inches in 2011. The number of brook trout was 479 per mile in 2013 compared to 340 per mile in 2011. The length frequency chart suggests that several year classes of brook trout are contributing to the population.

Brown Trout

Only 2 brown trout were captured (10.9 and 13.1 inches). Only occasional brown trout have been captured in previous surveys, and there appears to be very little natural reproduction of brown trout in this stream.

There are a few road crossing access points along the First South Branch Oconto River. Major road crossings occur on CTH W, State Highways 64 and 32, Tar Dam Road, and Bonita Road. There are large segments of stream that do not contain road crossings within the National Forest and would require walking or wading up to several miles to access the stream.

The trout fishing season on the First South Branch Oconto River begins on the first Saturday in May at 5:00 A.M. and runs through September 30.

The current fishing regulations (2013) classify the First South Branch Oconto River downstream from STH 64 to the mouth as a category 4 trout stream. A 12 inch minimum size limit for brown trout and an 8 inch minimum size limit for brook trout apply. The daily bag limit is 3 trout total.

The remaining section upstream from STH 64 is a category 2 regulation. The minimum size limit is 7 inches for all trout, with a daily bag limit of 5.

Anglers are encouraged to obtain and review a current copy of the trout fishing regulations before fishing these areas. Trout fishing regulations can be downloaded from the DNR's website at:

<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/fishing/regulations/index.html>

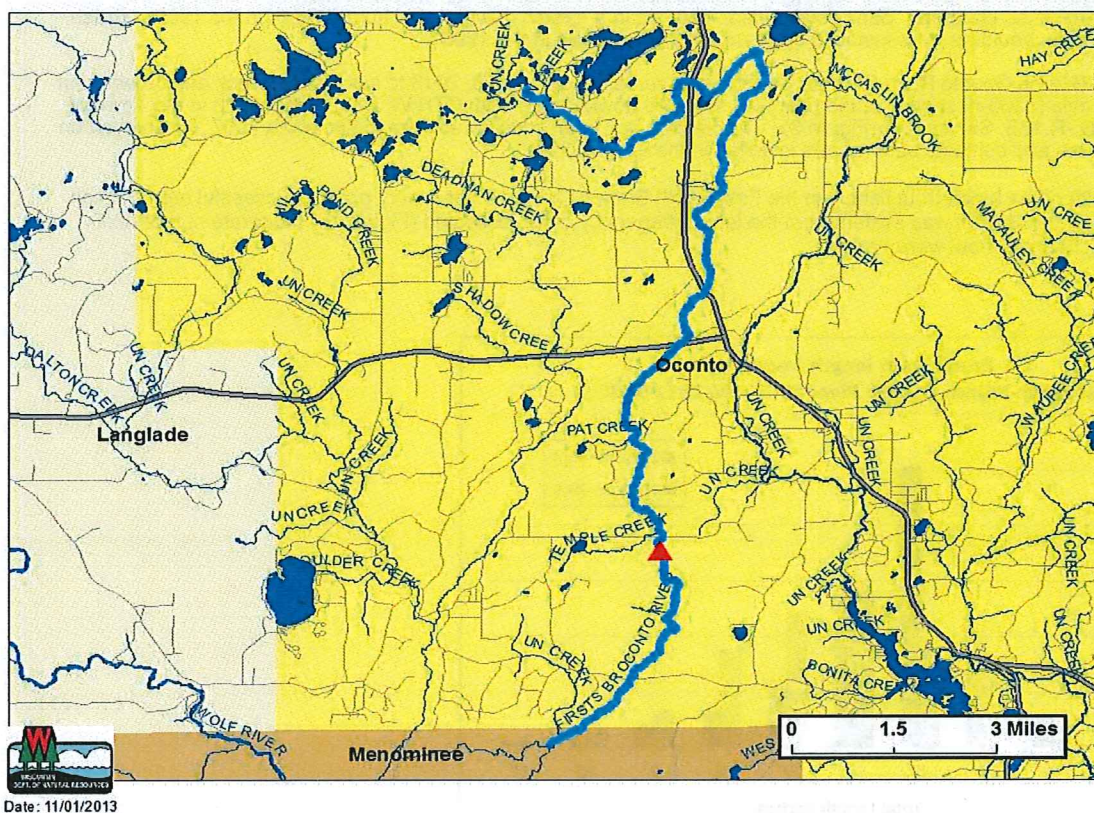


Figure 2. Sampling location (red triangle) on the First South Branch Oconto River at CTH W, Oconto County, Wisconsin.

Questions regarding fisheries management activities for the First South Branch Oconto River, Oconto County, can be directed to:

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